

1903-5

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Twenty-Ninth  
General Assembly of the  
Presbyterian Church in  
Canada



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British Columbia

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# Presbyterianism in British Columbia.

BY REV. R. G. MACBETH, M. A.

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FROM a study of the names of the early discoverers and explorers of New Caledonia, as the coast of British Columbia was at one time called, one would gather that the Presbyterian element was strong in the earliest days. The names of the men who blazed the way are for the most part the names of great Scottish clans, and we generally associate and bracket Scottish people and Presbyterianism. Perhaps some of these famous men were like the father of whom his little girl said, in answer to a question, that "he was a Presbyterian, but that he wasn't working at it very much." The men of that tumultuous time were perhaps Presbyterians, as their names indicate, but they were possibly too busy with other matters "to work at it." In any case a good many years elapsed from the day the first Scot crossed to the sea before the Presbyterian Church was planted on the shores of the Pacific. The sudden rush of immigration to the mining fields in the Fraser River region in 1858 was one of the commercial movements which attracted attention to spiritual needs. History repeated itself nearly half a century later when the great "stampede" into the Yukon fixed upon that Eldorado the eyes of the world and compelled the close interest of all the churches in the movement. Man cannot live by bread alone, neither can he subsist on the gold that perishes with

the using, and it is good to remember that in these wild excitements as to the prospect of sudden wealth the Church remained cool enough to attend to her business of looking after the spiritual welfare of humanity.

The gold-rush to the Fraser in 1859 led the Imperial Government to found a second colony west of the Rocky Mountains, to which the name of British Columbia was given. The Presbyterian Church, both in Canada and in the old land, was moved by this event to consider the advisability of organizing settled church work by the Pacific coast. Great bodies move slowly at times, and it was not till 1861 that the Rev. John Hall of the Irish Presbyterian Church was sent out to the colony on Vancouver Island and commenced his labors at Victoria. The organization of a congregation proceeded at once and in 1863 the corner-stone of the First Presbyterian Church was laid amid elaborate ceremony by the Honorable D. Cameron, then the Chief Justice of the colony. The First Presbyterian Church in Victoria, whose present pastor is the Rev. Dr. Campbell, has the honor of being the pioneer in the great host of church edifices west of the Red River District, in what is now Manitoba, where the Canadian Church had been built ten years previously. One can imagine the joy of

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the early band as they saw the building completed and crowned with the Scottish thistle, and dedicated to the worship of God in November, 1863. When the Assembly Commissioners, going over from Vancouver after the meeting in 1903, stood in the first church that had been erected in British Columbia forty years previously, they would doubtless marvel at what God had wrought in that comparatively short period. There are some who sneer at the church and the church's growth, but the fact that the little band on Vancouver Island had in that time grown so great that the Supreme Court of the Church crossed the continent to see how they did is answer enough to satisfy honest men.

In 1862 the Rev. Robert Jamieson was sent out by the Canada Presbyterian Church. Mr. Jamieson had come originally from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to labor in Western Ontario, but was chosen to come on to British Columbia. His name is probably better known in connection with the early days of Presbyterianism than any other. At the beginning of his ministry he established himself in New Westminster, the Royal City named by the Queen, which was the capital of the new colony on the Mainland. Here he founded St. Andrew's Church, which remains to this day, though in a much more beautiful building than the original place of worship, and here he continued his labors until 1864, when he removed to Nanaimo. At Nanaimo the congregation first met in the Court House—a church was built in 1866, another and better one was erected in 1888. Meanwhile Mr. Jamieson returned to New Westminster and was succeeded in 1869, at Nanaimo, by Rev. J. Aitken. Mr. Aitken returned eastward to Ontario about 1876, when the work came into the care of the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland. The church re-

mained for some years thus under the charge of the committee, and from one cause and another it dwindled down almost to a minus quantity. In 1870 the congregation called the Rev. D. A. McRae. Mr. McRae was a native of Glengarry and a graduate of the Presbyterian College, Montreal. He had all the grip and grit of the proverbial Scot, and under his ministry a splendid church building was erected at a cost of \$30,000. Owing to ill-health in his family, Mr. McRae retired from the work and the Rev. W. B. Canning, who did good service, succeeded him. The present pastor is the Rev. John M. Millar.

Going back to the thread of the story, we find that in 1875 Rev. Simon McGregor, then pastor of St. Andrew's Church, Victoria, went to Scotland to lay before the Colonial Committee of the Church the great needs of the country, to explain its vast extent and the necessity for assistance from the brethren in the old land. In this mission he seems to have been very successful, for the money grants were increased, and Mr. McGregor returned with four ministers: William Clyde, A. H. Anderson, J. Miller and Alexander Dunn. These, with Mr. McGregor and Mr. Jamieson, were constituted as the first Presbytery of British Columbia, on August 31st, 1875. Of these ministers the only one now in the work is the Rev. Alexander Dunn, and as he is the Senior Presbyterian minister in the service of the Church in British Columbia, it is due to him as a pioneer to give the following extract from a recent issue of *The Presbyterian*:

The district assigned to Mr. Dunn was that along the Fraser River, from the Gulf of Georgia to Yale, the head of navigation, a district about 100 miles in length and from 20 to 30 in width. Following the advice of Mr. Jamieson, who knew the district well, Mr. Dunn made his headquarters at



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Langley, where he remained for nearly eleven years. Although the population remained almost stationary for six or seven years, two church buildings were erected in 1885, one at Fort Langley and another at Mud Bay, costing about \$1,000 each, one-half of which amount was raised in the respective districts, and the other among the friends at Victoria and New Westminster. The field was a large and laborious one, and the work involved severe physical toil and left but little time for study. So great did the strain become that there were times when he felt strongly disposed to resign his post, but the needs of the work and the strongly expressed desire of people of all classes, as well as the apparent impossibility of securing a successor, either from Scotland or Ontario, made the duty to remain very clear. But with the increase of population the work grew heavier, and with his system weakened by constant exposure to the weather, respite became an absolute necessity.

In 1866 Mr. Dunn attended the General Assembly at Hamilton and applied for work under the H.M.C of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, with the approval of the Church of Scotland, under whose auspices he had been laboring. It was his hope to be appointed to a part of the Langley field, but as the way was not yet clear for the division of the territory, he accepted an appointment to Alberni, on Vancouver Island. The work here was also exacting and arduous. The roads were better than in the Fraser River field, but there were no bridges and all the travelling had to be done on foot. To attend a meeting of presbytery at Victoria involved a walk of 110 miles, as there was then no stage from Alberni to Nanaimo. In 1880 he was appointed to the Mount Lehman field, which then included Mount Lehman, Aldergrove, Abbotsford, Agassiz, Sumas, Dewdney, Mission and Whonnock. In the last named place Mr. Dunn has continued to reside until the present. The original field has been divided and rearranged so that it has now developed into five fields with as many workers.

Within the bounds of what is now the Presbytery of New Westminster, where, in 1875, Mr. Jamieson of New Westminster and Mr. Dunn were the only two ministers, there are now eight self-supporting charges and eleven strong mission fields.

This extract will give some idea of the work done by those who bore the burden and heat of the day in the Western Province.

Going back to Victoria we find a second church formed under the name of St. Andrew's, in 1868, and the new building was dedicated in April, 1869. This building sufficed until 1889, when the present handsome structure was erected under the pastorate of the Rev. P. McF. McLeod. The present pastor is the Rev. W. L. Clay, a distinguished graduate of McGill University and the Montreal Presbyterian College. Since the formation of these churches three others have been organized. The most important of these is St. Paul's, Victoria West, under charge of the Rev. D. McRae, who had done notable service in the early days of Manitoba before he came to British Columbia in 1886.

Meanwhile, as settlement was spreading over the Mainland and the Island, the Presbyterian Church was keeping abreast of the general progressiveness. Comox, Alberni, Langley, Chilliwack, Eburne and many other stations were added. The City of Vancouver came into existence and work was begun here by the Rev. T. G. Thompson (now of Vankleek Hill), then the missionary at Eburne. Mr. Thompson founded the First Presbyterian Church (the present pastor of which is the Rev. R. G. MacBeth) and there has been steady growth in Presbyterian circles in the city. There are now five churches in Vancouver. The First Presbyterian above mentioned, St. Andrew's Church (Rev. R. J. Wilson), Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian (Rev. George A. Wilson), The Chalmers (Rev. J. Knox Wright), and St. John's (not yet settled). The progress of Presbyterianism in the city and province has been due, in considerable measure, to the work of the Rev. E. D. McLaren, formerly pastor of St. Andrew's Church, and now Secretary for Home Missions in Canada. He was for years Convener of the

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Synod's Home Mission Committee, and hence had a great deal to do with planting churches and mission stations all over British Columbia.

The General Assembly last year, in its readjustment of work consequent on the death of Dr. Robertson, appointed Rev. Dr. Herdman, of Calgary, Superintendent of Missions for British Columbia. As Dr. Herdman devotes his whole time to the duties of his office, and has qualities and experience that fit him specially for it, the whole work of church extension in this province will feel the effect of his services.

Reverting again to the earlier times, we find that in the '70's a Presbytery had been formed under the Church of Scotland, in which McGregor, Jamieson, Williams, Somerville, Clyde, McElmon, Murray, Stephens, Miller, Dunn and others were members. As the Church of Scotland gradually withdrew, this Presbytery practically disbanded, but the Presbyterian Church in Canada formed the Presbytery of Columbia, which held its first meeting in New Westminster in August, 1886. The veteran Rev. R. Jamieson was moderator, and the other members were Revs. D. Fraser, T. G. Thomson, D. McRae, J. Chisholm, S. J. Taylor, J. A. Jaffray and Alexander Dunn, with Alex. McDougall, Walter Clark and T. McCleary, elders. This Presbytery gave its first report to the General Assembly in 1887, showing nine ministers, forty-five churches and mission stations, 245 communicants and \$11,000 for church purposes for the preceding year. Now the returns for the

Synod of British Columbia (which includes the Calgary Presbytery) shows 135 churches, 75 ministers, nearly 7,000 communicants and contributions for all purposes last year of \$160,000. This surely is great progress.

In the intervening years great movement had taken place. Instead of one Presbytery we have now the Presbyteries of Victoria, Westminster, Kamloops, Kootenay and part of the Presbytery of Calgary within the province. Up and down the mountains and valleys we have had and still have a band of devoted missionaries and ministers whose names we cannot mention in our space, but whose work has made tremendous impression for good upon the Pacific Province. Away out to the banks of the Yukon River and by the gold-bearing creeks of the north, the Blue Banner has been unfurled by the hands of men who were willing to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And now in this year of our Lord 1903 the General Assembly of the Church has held its meeting with splendid success in the City of Vancouver. Last year in Toronto a lady told me that it was one of the great dreams of Dr. Robertson that some day the Church in the West would be strong enough to justify the Assembly meeting in Vancouver. The dream has become a reality, and that it is so is due to the self-denying labors of the men who died in faith without receiving the promises, but who saw with vision splendid the approach of this day and rejoiced in its coming. May we also labor to prepare the land for a more glorious day than our own eyes have seen.



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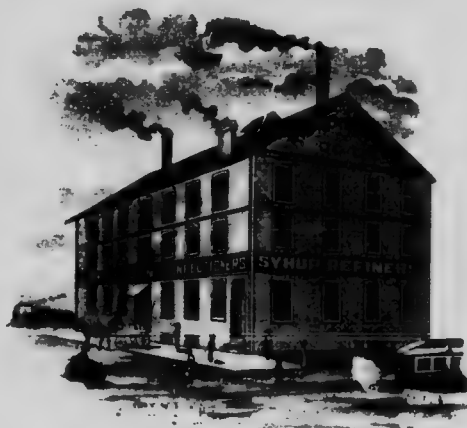
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# A Short Sketch of the Growth and Progress of the City.

BY REV. R. J. WILSON, B. A.

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BORN as a city in January, 1886; baptized by a fire in June of the same year until it was reduced in size by three-quarters; Vancouver, if the youngest, is yet the most hopeful of Canada's growing family of cities. She has now a population of over 30,000, and has a reasonable promise of becoming many times her present size within a very few decades.

The terminus of the C. P. R., and therefore the western gateway for the eastern trade, the transshipment of freight at this port is already enormous, and rival railroads are entering the field for a share of the carrying trade.

Vancouver has one of the finest harbors in the world—a landlocked body of water—three miles wide and more than fifteen miles in length. The scenery on either side of this inlet is singularly beautiful.

As a lumbering centre Vancouver ranks easily first in the province, the shipments of lumber to foreign ports last year being in excess of 43,000,000 feet, besides the shingle output to eastern Canada of more than a trainload per day.

Lying as she does at the gateway to the upper country, it is not surprising that this city is the base of the mining operations of the mainland, and although the untold wealth of this country has yet scarcely been touched, a single district for a single week last year had an output of more than 10,000 tons of ore.

Everyone knows of British Columbia salmon, and when you see the B. C. brand on a can you may know that it came from the vicinity of Vancouver; for the Fraser, with its illimitable supply, empties into the gulf but a few miles away.

Ninety canneries are in operation, and last year there were over 990,000 CASES shipped from the Fraser river alone.

All this means that this province is rich in material wealth. The banking institutions recognize this, for Vancouver has the most palatial bank buildings of any city of its size in America; they are large and substantial, but not more so than the volume of business transacted; the bank clearings last year were over *fifty-four million four hundred thousand dollars*. In this respect Vancouver is the seventh city of Canada.

But Vancouver has many young families, therefore she has many schools—and good ones, too. There is probably no higher



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standard of primary education in the whole Dominion than is to be found in the Pacific Province cities.

There is in the city's seven public schools accommodation for 4,500 pupils: they are always full and the pupils are well taught by an army of ninety efficient teachers. The high school is manned by ten masters, all honor graduates of eastern universities, and high school under-graduates are allowed, by the privileges of affiliation in Vancouver, to complete the first two years of the arts course in McGill University. The day is not far off when a chartered university will be found here, too.

There are in this city four hospitals, a children's home and orphanage, the Carnegie free library and reading room and the Y. M. C. A. reading room.

All the principal points of interest and the suburbs are made easy of access by means of a thoroughly efficient electric car service, which is controlled by the company operating the connecting interurban line to New Westminster and the systems in that city and in Victoria.

Vancouver possesses what is the largest and grandest park in Canada—Stanley Park. The park contains about one thousand acres, and is within a very short distance of the centre of the city, street cars running to the two entrances. The larger portion of the park is the dense forest growth peculiar to British Columbia, and ten minutes after leaving the city one can be so secluded as to

believe civilization miles away. Through this forest, where huge trees grow to a tremendous height, and giant ferns are in profusion, roads extend, leading wherever one wishes. Formed of broken shell or gravel, they are as hard as a floor and excellent for walking, wheeling or driving.

But Vancouver can also be called a church-going city, and the score of fine church edifices (five of them Presbyterian) which adorn her streets, well filled on the Sabbath day with intelligent, reverent worshippers, are a testimony that her citizens have not forgotten the God of their fathers.

In all matters—educational, moral, religious and political—it may be fairly held that Vancouver is making an honest endeavor to be a worthy entrance way to the great country behind and beyond the mountains that are round about her. To be such is no unworthy ambition.

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The Vancouver Tourist Association—a bureau of information—endeavors to supply to strangers and others any information relative to the city or province. Samples of fruits, grains and grasses of the different sections of the country are on exhibition. Guide-books and maps, the leading newspapers, time-tables, and railway and government literature can also be found here. For any further information, write the secretary of the Vancouver Tourist Association, Vancouver, British Columbia.

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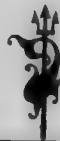
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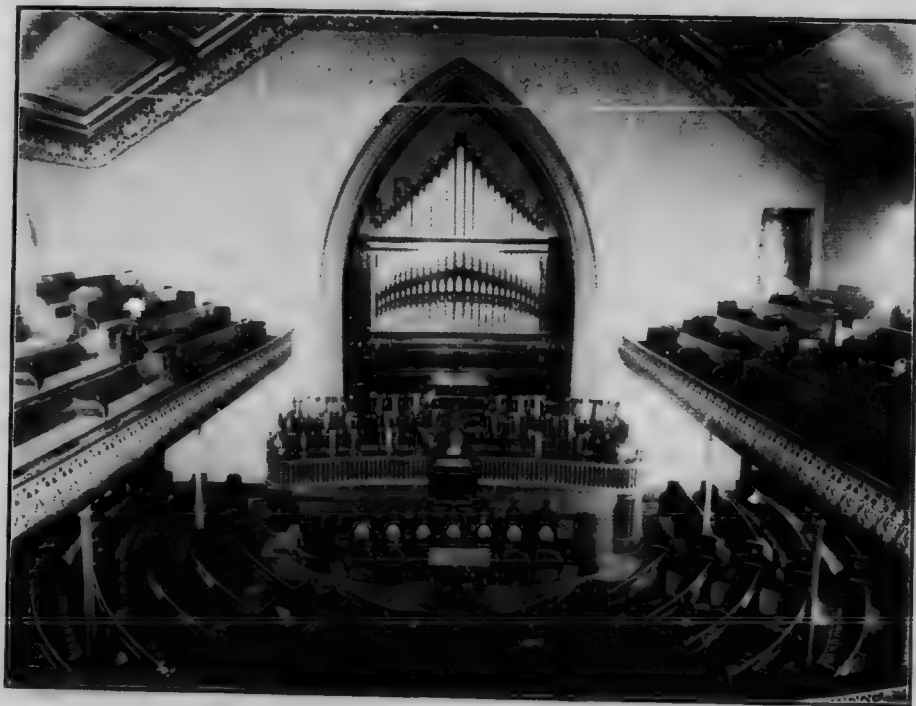
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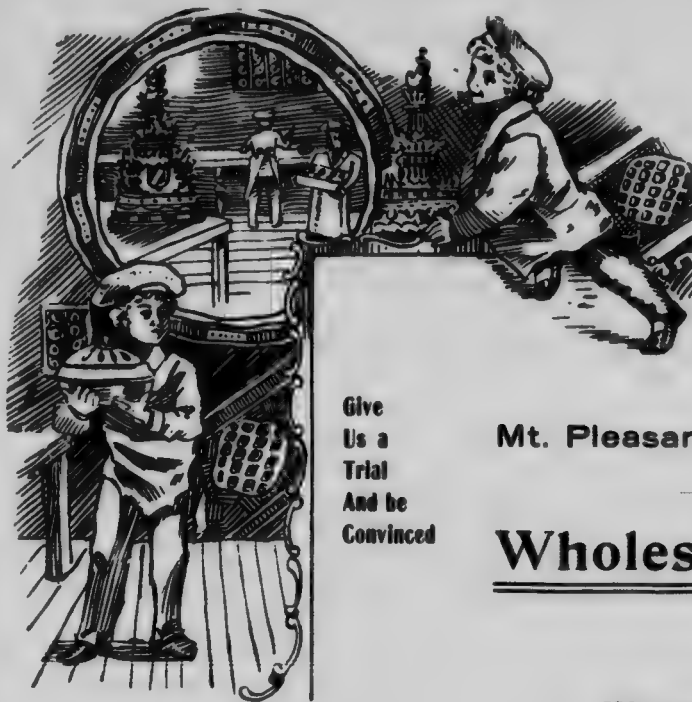
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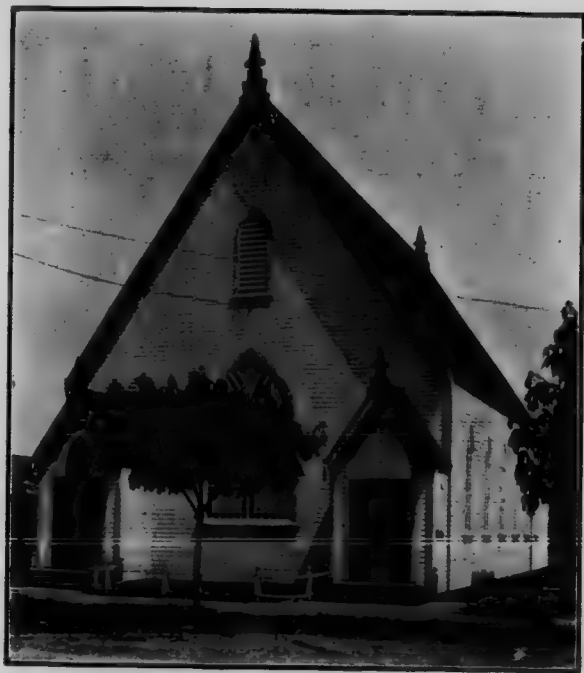
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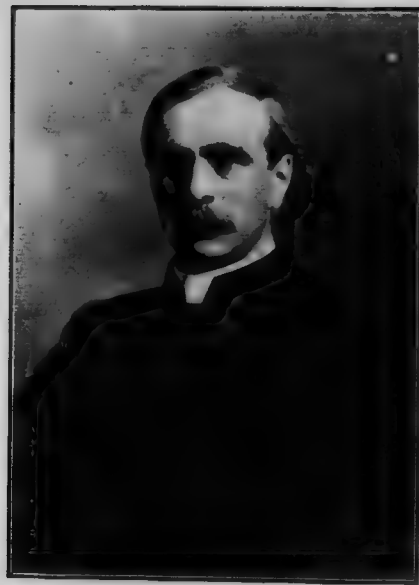


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|               | 200,000 ft. Lumber    |
| Storage       | 50,000,000 Shingles   |
| Sheds         | 2,000,000 ft. Lumber  |

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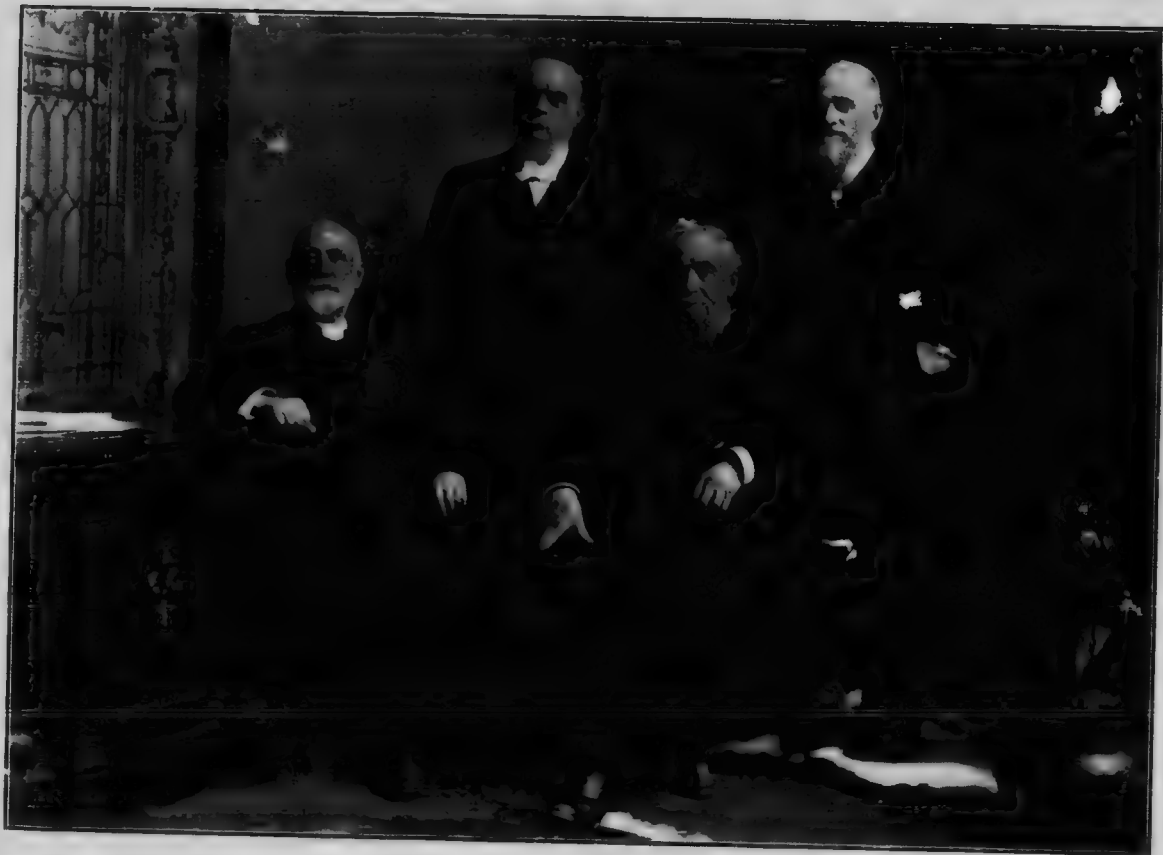
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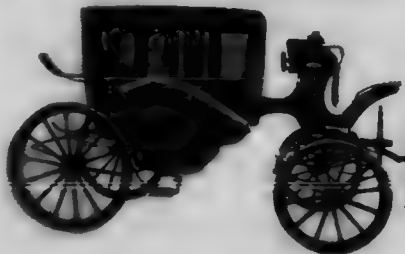
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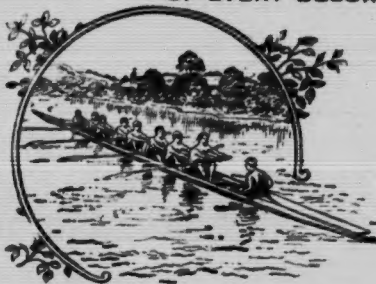
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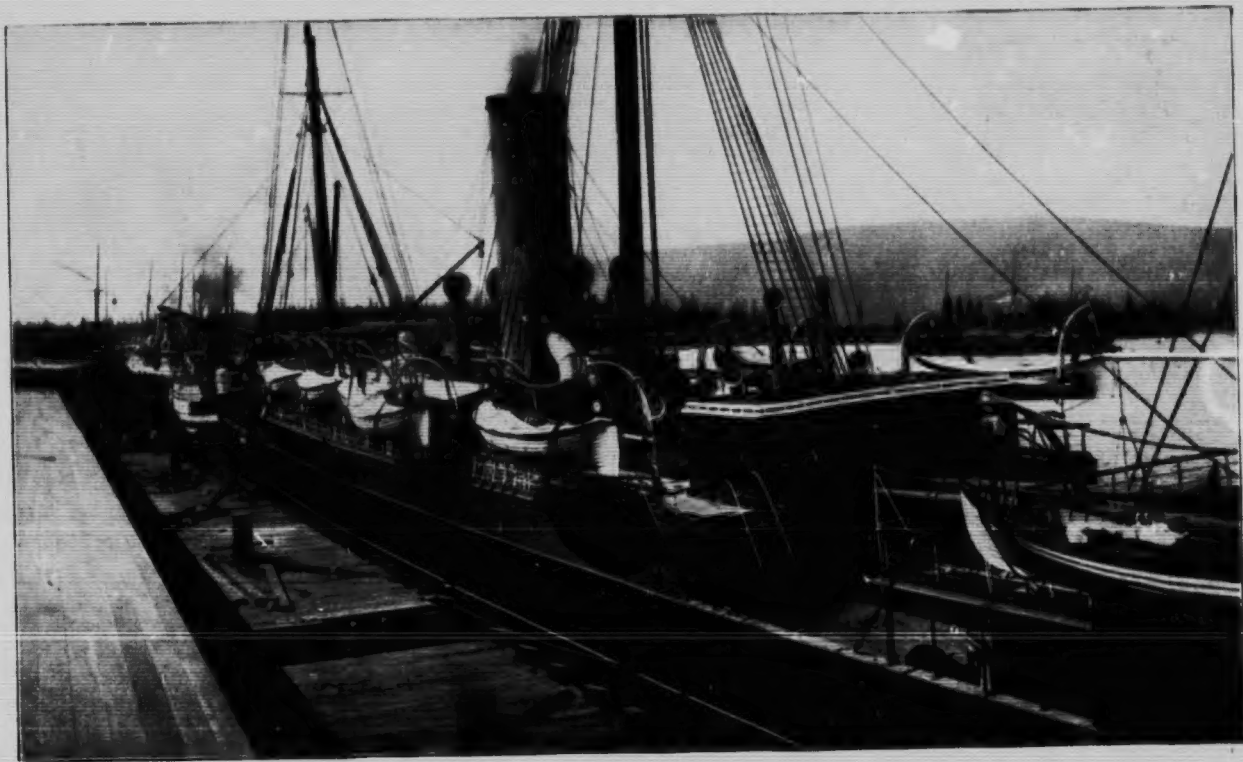
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